

Nevada Natural Resources Plan

January 2001 Update



Nevada Department of
Conservation and Natural
Resources (DCNR)

www.state.nv.us/cnr



Purpose of the Update

The DCNR has made good progress on the Nevada Natural Resources Plan (NRP) process. This update is sent to keep NRP stakeholders informed of plan activities, work products, and changes to the process.

Overview of the State NRP

Creating an integrated natural resources plan is a top DCNR Strategic Plan objective. To reach this objective, the DCNR set up the NRP Planning Team in 1999 and launched the interagency NRP project. The NRP is a state-based initiative to promote greater government and citizen stewardship of natural and environmental resources where needed most. Having a focus on process, the plan goals emphasize: 1) coordination among state and federal agencies, local governments and the interested public; 2) distribution of information about resources and important regional or statewide issues; and, 3) cooperative approaches to identifying, prioritizing and addressing issues that need more attention.

The NRP Planning Team consists of the Steering Committee and Technical Working Group (TWG). Executives of the department and its divisions make up the Steering Committee, which meets periodically to guide development and implementation of the planning process. The TWG includes managers from the DCNR and each of its divisions, the Department of Agriculture and the Division of Minerals. The TWG meets monthly about plan development and related activities. The natural resource planner assigned to the director's office carries out administrative duties.

Photo (left): Utah juniper woodlands and sagebrush of the Great Basin desert ecoregion meet Joshua trees and cholla cactus of the Mojave desert ecoregion on the flanks of a mountain range in southeastern Nevada, producing a remarkable diversity of living things.

NRP Related Activities During 1999-2000

- The state Department of Agriculture and Division of Minerals joined the TWG.
- Environmental planning principles – the Enlibra Doctrine, sustainable development and ecosystem management – were incorporated into the Plan Guidelines.
- An Internet web site for the NRP was created and is being maintained.
- An inventory and ranking of issues important to TWG agencies was prepared.
- A brochure describing the proposed NRP and providing a schedule for public workshops was sent to over 2000 stakeholders to encourage public input.
- Nine public workshops were held in rural, urban and suburban communities to learn more about important issues and ideas for solutions in different areas of the state.
- Over twenty presentations on the proposed NRP process were given in order to get input from county commissions, DCNR advisory commissions, and state and federal agencies.
- The Draft Summary Report of Public Workshop Comments on the NRP was prepared.
- The *Guide to Nevada State Statutes for Natural Resources* has been prepared. It can be viewed at the Internet at the NRP web site, www.state.nv.us/cnr/nrp/.
- The TWG continues to preparation of three technical reports for use in the NRP process; these comprehensive reports will cover the issues, agency planning, and status of natural resources.
- State Planning Team reviewed and revised the proposed scope of the NRP (*Basic NRP*, back)
- The Governor's office initiated collaborative planning efforts for sage grouse conservation, invasive weed control and fire management.

THE BASIC NRP

Updated Scope of Work & Outcomes

In December 2000, the state Planning Team went back to review the proposed scope of work and the desired outcomes of the NRP. Two key assumptions were challenged: A) data gathering, report preparation, issue assessment and coordinated planning tasks would occur concurrently; and, B) collaborative planning would be the only strategic approach to address priority issues. In our brief experience with the NRP process, we have gained a deeper appreciation for challenges presented in the complexity of today's resource issues, the range of stakeholder interests, the diversity of viewpoints, and the breadth of options available to address major issues. We have also seen how state agency resources are like many of Nevada's natural resources - limited and committed. Given this insight, the Planning Team adjusted the NRP scope of work and scale of outputs as shown on the chart, right, and as outlined below. The basic order of work will be:

- 1) Finish the Input tasks and produce related reports on resource statutes, issues, agency planning and the status of natural resources.
- 2) Implement the planning process:
 - identify agency involvement in each issue and determine which need more attention;
 - prioritize the issues that need more attention and define related problems; and,
 - evaluate alternative approaches to address and resolve priority issues.
- 3) Make recommendations on strategies that can be implemented to address and resolve priority issues.



Photo Caption (above): Valley and lower mountain slopes throughout the northern two-thirds of Nevada have been overrun by cheatgrass. Cheatgrass is an annual that dries by early summer when it readily ignites and rapidly carries fire. It has successfully invaded degraded sagebrush and other shrub ecosystems where cheatgrass has out-competed native perennial grasses. Once burned, cheatgrass infested shrublands often become monocultures, easily ignited again and again. The cheatgrass re-burning cycle prevents native plant populations from reestablishing. In this altered state, watershed, wildlife, grazing, recreation, and aesthetic values are vastly diminished. Rehabilitating burned areas in the arid/semi-arid shrubland zone has proved difficult. This aggressive, non-native grass has occupied roughly nine million acres throughout northern Nevada.

Photo Caption (right): This site is located where the Mojave and Great Basin desert ecoregions converge. Here, annual precipitation averages 12 to 14 inches and summer rains are common. Indian ricegrass, Ephedra, cottonthorn and Joshua trees are plants found on these valley slopes.

Photo Caption (left): Aspen groves occur along creeks, meadow edges, and slope toes and mountain ridges kept moist with near-surface groundwater. Associated plants are willows, snowberry, Woods rose, columbine, lupine, slender wheat grass and Kentucky bluegrass. Wildlife found inhabiting aspen groves could include deer, grouse, beaver, raptors and cavity nesting birds.

Top Resource Issues

To gain a better understanding of top issues, the TWG held public workshops and conducted an internal survey. Commenters included resource managers, users, educators, local government officials, interest groups and citizens. Issues were grouped by themes that became evident in the record of comments. Looking at the number of times and the number of locations that related comments were made, the issue themes were ranked. We found these to be themes of most interest statewide.

- Conserving open space, public land access, and agricultural lands in urban and fast growing areas, while meeting additional development needs
- Coordinating & encouraging proactive government and private efforts to avert threats to vulnerable wildlife species and habitats
- Conducting watershed planning and management to improve and protect water supplies and quality, wetlands, riparian lands and floodplains
- Restoring and sustaining the ecological health of rangelands for watershed, wildlife habitat, recreation and commodity uses
- Conserving and managing forests and woodland ecosystems for watershed, wildlife habitat, recreation, and commodity uses
- Anticipating the growing and diversified demand for outdoor recreation and public land access while minimizing resource impacts



Basic NRP

NRP GUIDELINES

Purpose:
Coordinate planning activities and develop integrated planning processes necessary to advance DCNR mission accomplishment.

Goals:

- Internal Coordination
- External Coordination, Public Input
- Issue Mitigation
- Resource and Socioeconomic Information

Principles:

- WGA Enlibra Doctrine
- Ecosystem Management
- Sustainable Development

INPUTS

Resource Planning by DCNR & Other State Agencies

- Statute/policy
- Program/procedure
- Funding
- Objectives Needing Coordination

Resource Issues Inventory & Overview

- Conditions
- Use
- Management Status
- Science

Issue Info. Sources

- DCNR Survey
- NRP Public Workshops
- Land Use Summit
- NDSL Public Land Policy Workshops

Resource Status & Trends

- Resource Conditions & Environmental Quality
- Resource Use & Related Socioeconomic Conditions
- Environmental Infrastructure Needs

PROCESS

Match up Issues with DCNR Agency Duties

Resource Issue 1

- Divisions
- Coord. W/in DCNR
- Coord. W/Other State Agencies
- Coord. W/other Agencies, Govt.s

Determine Whether Issue is a Priority/Orphan

- Needs more attention
- State jurisdiction
- Multi-jurisdiction
- Resource, environmental conditions
- Socioeconomics
- Region/Statewide Geopolitical Scope
- Perceived as urgent today or for the future

Determine DCNR Coverage of & Level of Attention to Issues

- Issues Not Needing more Attention
- Issues Needing More Attention by Division or DCNR
- Issues Needing More Attention by Federal or Local Government

Identify Potential Needs and Options to Address Priority/Orphan Issues

Resource Issue 1

Authority/Coord. Level	Policy	Reg.	Plan	Law
Div	✓	✓		
DCNR	✓			
State	✓		✓	
Local			✓	✓
Federal			✓	✓
Other			✓	✓

Make Recommendations on Alternative Strategies to Address Priority/Orphan Issues

Strategy Options	Issue1	Issue2	Issue3
Division Only	reg.s		
DCNR Coordination		co-plan	
DCNR Coordination W/ other state agencies		advisory policies	
DCNR Coordination W/ local ± federal agencies			
Collaborative Process W/all interested parties			detailed policies

OUTPUTS

NRP Introduction

- NRP Origin
- Guidelines
- Natural Resources Overview
- Resource & Coordination Issues

Summary of Public Workshop Comments

Guide to Nevada State Statutes on Natural Resources

Summary of DCNR & State Agency Resource Plans

DCNR & State Agency Coordination Needs & Opportunities

Overview of Natural Resource Issues

Resources Inventory & Status

Recommended Strategic Approaches to Address Priority Issues